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Summary record of the 61st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 25 May 1999, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Ms. Brennen-Haylock (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Bahamas)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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In the absence of Mr. Abelian (Armenia), Ms. Brennen-Haylock (Bahamas), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 123: Financing of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission and the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola (*continued*) (A/53/908, A/53/937 and A/53/957)

Agenda item 140: Financing of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (*continued*) (A/53/437/Add.1, A/53/786, A/53/812/Add.1 and A/53/958)

Agenda item 161: Financing of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (*continued*) (A/53/791, A/53/939 and A/53/971)

1. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) introduced the reports of the Advisory Committee on the financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola (A/53/957), the financing of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (A/53/958) and the financing of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (A/53/971) and commended them to the attention of the Fifth Committee.

2. **Mr. Wharton** (United States of America) said that his delegation fully supported the Advisory Committee's observations and recommendations concerning the financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola (A/53/957). However, he noted with concern the Advisory Committee's observation that the overall monitoring of expenditures for that Mission had been weak. Moreover, because of two particularly damaging reports by the Board of Auditors (A/53/5 (Vol. II)) and by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (A/52/881), the General Assembly had called upon the Secretary-General in resolution 52/8 C to report before the second part of the resumed fifty-third session on the status of measures taken to address the UNAVEM procurement irregularities identified in the April 1998 OIOS report. That request had been repeated in General Assembly resolution 53/211. His delegation was therefore extremely disappointed by the Controller's statement that the report requested by the Assembly would not be ready until the fifty-fourth session.

3. It was particularly disheartening because the Deputy Secretary-General, in reply to a letter from the United States Mission five months previously, had indicated that a report on progress with respect to the UNAVEM investigation would be submitted to the General Assembly "shortly". In that connection, he wondered what interpretation should be given to the word "shortly", since the report was not yet ready. He also wondered where the evidence was of the Secretariat's taking action against the abuse of the procurement process if it was unable to prepare a report nearly one year after the Assembly had formally requested it and more than two years after the Office of Internal Oversight Services had officially reported on the procurement problems in Angola.

4. It was difficult for his delegation not to conclude that the institutional culture of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations did not yet accord sufficient priority to combating such abuses. His Government was seriously concerned about procurement mismanagement and possible corruption in United Nations peacekeeping operations and was especially interested in ensuring that corrective action was taken and that those responsible were held accountable for their actions. His delegation wished to know from the Secretariat why the report had been delayed and when it would be provided. It also noted the Advisory Committee's statement expressing hope that the lessons learned from the procurement problems in Angola would lead to improvements in other missions. He called upon the Secretariat to guarantee that, in the planning and conduct of the mission for East Timor, every effort would be made to ensure that procurement irregularities similar to those in UNAVEM and MONUA would not recur.

5. **Ms. Emerson** (Portugal) expressed support for the statement made by the United States delegation. Her delegation had also been seriously concerned about the irregularities in UNAVEM and MONUA and wished to know why the report requested in paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 52/8 C had not yet been issued.

6. **Mr. Persaud** (Field Administration and Logistics Division, Department of Peacekeeping Operations) said that, while most of the reports that had been requested by the General Assembly had been issued, it had not been possible to complete two of them in time. Work was ongoing on the drafts in question, which required extensive preparation to present a clear picture of what had actually transpired in the area of procurement. He expected the reports to be ready before the start of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

7. A number of steps had been taken to transfer the lessons learned from the procurement operation in Angola to other missions. Several training courses had been held, including in Angola and Brindisi, to update knowledge of procurement practices.

8. While the Secretariat could not guarantee that in the planning and conduct of the operation in East Timor all actions would be taken strictly in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules, the Field Administration and Logistics Division was determined to ensure that those who were deployed to existing missions and to East Timor were properly briefed; the Division had improved monitoring of all such missions to ensure that the Financial Regulations and Rules were strictly complied with. He hoped that tighter controls, combined with training, would help to avoid any recurrence of the difficulties that had been experienced in Angola. Moreover, none of the staff members who had been involved in the procurement difficulties in Angola was now involved in the procurement or finance areas.

Agenda item 143: Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations (*continued*)

(a) Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations (*continued*)

Death and disability benefits (continued) (A/C.5/53/58)

9. **The Chairman** proposed that the Fifth Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it should take note of the note of the Secretary-General on the quarterly report for the period from 1 January to 31 March 1999 on progress made in clearing the backlog of claims for incidents (A/C.5/53/58).

10. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.